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ABSTRACT

A statistical survey of continuing vocational training (CVT) in a sample of companies was carried out in 1993 in the 12 countries of the European Economic Community (EEC). The French part of the survey was conducted on a sample of 1,848 companies. France had the highest rate of access to courses with a recourse to training that falls within the average. In terms of disparities in access according to categories of workers, France did not stand out. Those with higher chances of access were men, supervisors and technicians, and employed in large companies, notably banks and insurance companies. Company expenditures for CVT represented from 1 to 2.2 percent of the total labor costs. In relation to a "European" average, the French situation was characterized by a high expenditure per employee, resulting from the high rate of access to CVT and programs that were longer than the average. In France, 35 percent of the companies had a training plan, whereas this was the case for only about 25 percent of the companies in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Italy. French companies most often used courses and training in work situations (TWS). TWS was widespread in large companies (75 percent) and present in the majority of medium-sized companies (45-69 percent). TWS was generally linked to training courses or other training situations. TWS objectives fell into two categories: management of employment and mobility, and adaptation of competencies to technical and organizational changes. (YLB)

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CONTINUING TRAINING IN THE COMPANIES: FRANCE'S POSITION IN EUROPE

For the first time in Europe, company efforts in the area of continuing vocational education and training can be measured with the help of indicators jointly devised to meet the needs of a Community-wide statistical survey. This new source allows for a fuller reading of the French data within a European context. It can be seen, for example, that the French case is characterised by relatively frequent use of training courses and, to a lesser degree, training in a work situation. Conversely, self-training and more informal training situations (lectures, workshops, job rotation, quality circles) are not widespread.

The role of French companies in vocational training can be broadly summarised by a relatively slight presence in the area of initial vocational education and training but a strong involvement in that of continuing training. The impact of the Law of 1971 and the intensity of collective bargaining around the issues of in-company training, reinforced by a substantial number of laws and regulations, have led to considerable development of continuing vocational training (CVT) for more than twenty years. Long held to be a tool for resolving social tensions and assisting with employment problems, CVT increasingly emerges as a strategic factor in the modernisation of the company.

France's CVT system clearly reveals distinctive features with regard to both its history and its structure. Thus, even if similar forms can be found in several other European countries, the principle of the employer's legal obligation to finance training has been imposed on French companies more intensively and for a longer period of time than elsewhere.

In this respect, it is interesting to know whether France's partners in the European Union have developped programmes for the continuing training of employees that are equivalent in terms of scale and means of implementation. However, the investigation and comparison of continuing training practices in European companies comes up against numerous difficulties, notably the national specificities of the cultural and institutional contexts. This is why a Community statistical survey was carried out in a sample of companies from the twelve member countries (see Box).

The main results of the French portion of this survey are presented below and compared with equivalent data currently available from several other European partners.

CONTINUING TRAINING COURSES

Better Chances of Access for French Employees

Two indicators permit the use of continuing training to be evaluated: the proportion of companies that have financed training courses during the year gives information about the distribution of CVT, while the opportunity for personnel to have access to the training courses measures the intensity of the companies' effort.

France appears to have continuing training activities that are intense but limited in their distribution among the

The Community Survey on Continuing Training in the Companies

A statistical survey of continuing training in the companies, organised within the framework of the FORCE programme and in close co-operation with EUROSTAT, was carried out in 1993 in the twelve countries of the EEC.

The survey is based on a preliminary study aimed at harmonising the concepts, classifications and methods used in each country. CVT is broadly defined to include all activities that are aimed at training, planned in advance and financed wholly or in part by the employer. It consists of courses offered within or outside the company, training in the work situation (see Box page 3) or participation for training purposes in lectures or workshops, job rotations or quality circles or self-training through distance learning or multimedia. Apprenticeship and all forms of alternating training are excluded from the field of the survey.

The French part of the survey, carried out by Céreq in collaboration with the Lavialle polling institute, was conducted on a sample of 1,848 companies having at least ten salaried employees and belonging to the private and non-private sectors' with the exception of agriculture and bodies involved in the social services, training and health. The French postal service and France Télécom, the French telephone company, are included. ■

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companies. In fact, its profile combines the highest rate of access to courses with a recourse to training that falls within the average. In the countries of Northern Europe (Netherlands and Germany), a majority of companies, regardless of their size, have recourse to training courses. In the countries of the South (Spain and Italy), this proportion is much lower and is concentrated in the large companies. In terms of access to training, the efforts of companies in the other European countries is on a level considerably lower than that of France—at least ten points lower in the case of the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Germany, and even more for Spain, Belgium, and Italy.

RECOURSE TO TRAINING, RATE OF ACCESS AND LENGTH OF TRAINING

	Proportion of companies having recourse to training courses (%)	Rate of access to training courses (%)	Average length of training per participant (hours)
France	48	36	52
Belgium	41	25	56
Netherlands	56	26	47
Luxembourg	50	24	45
Germany	59	24	35
Spain	21	20	50
Italy[1]	9	14	41

1. estimated (Céreq)

In terms of disparities in access according to categories of workers, France does not stand out from its partners. In the countries observed, with the exception of Belgium, men tend to have slightly higher chances of access than women. Supervisors and technicians are the two personnel categories that benefit from the most sizeable effort. Operatives are at the bottom of the ladder everywhere, with clerical workers and service and sales personnel occupying an intermediate position.

In all countries, employees in large companies have higher chances of access to training than those in the SMEs. This hierarchy remains moderate in the countries of Northern Europe, notably Germany, but it is quite pronounced in Spain, with France falling in between because of a particularly low rate of access in the small companies (11 % for those with 10 to 49 employees). The sectoral positions are similar in all of the countries observed. Banks and insurance companies rank first, ahead of energy and transportation equipment manufacturing. Conversely, construction, the textile and clothing industry and the hotel and catering industry are at the bottom of the ladder.

The average length of training courses does not exceed fifty-six hours per participant, with little variation from one country to another: only in Germany is training shorter. There is generally little variation in the length of training according to the size of the companies. Short training courses for the adaptation of competences to the employee's current job seem to predominate, with employers' investments in long, skilling training most often limited to the sums required by law or agreements related to training leaves.

CVT Costs: Similar Hierarchies Regardless of the Indicator Used

In the European countries observed, company expenditures for continuing training represent from 1 to 2.2 percent of the total labour costs. Three groups can be distinguished in function of the relative size of these expenditures: France stands alone at the head of the list, followed by the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and finally Italy, Germany, Spain and Belgium. However, it appears difficult to measure the companies' financial effort on the basis of this rate alone. Indeed, two factors may contribute to the extent of the gap between France and the other countries: on the one hand, the fact that French companies are more inclined to record training costs because of the declaration they are required to make, and on the other hand, the fact that the labour cost with which training expenditures are put in relation to is probably underestimated (since *labour cost* is a broader concept than that of *wage bill*, which is more commonly used in France). Another indicator, the average training expenditure per employee, allows this second difficulty to be resolved.

Thus, in relation to a "European" average, the French situation seems to be characterised by a high expenditure per employee, resulting from the high rate of access to continuing training and the duration of the programmes, which is longer than the average. By comparison, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (apart from hourly costs for the latter) generally show average values. In Germany, Spain, and Belgium, the lower level of cost per employee (and of the proportion of labour costs allotted to training) stem in fact from opposing reasons: Germany combines an average rate of access, a short programme length and hourly costs just above average while in Spain and Belgium, the low level of expenditures is explained above all by a very selective access to training programmes.

COST INDICATORS FOR IN-COMPANY AND OUTSIDE TRAINING COURSES

	%[1]	Training expenditure per employee (francs)	Hourly cost (francs)
France	2.2	4 000	211
Belgium	0.6	1 470	228
Netherlands	1.8	3 255	263
Luxembourg	1.7	3 447	319
Germany	1.2	2 365	285
Spain	1.0	1 535	151
Italy	1.3	n.a.	227

1. Percentage of the wage bill

While the relative share of CVT expenditures within labour costs increases with the size of the companies in all countries, the breadth of the gaps observed between the different classes is unequal: in Italy, the size of the companies has a moderate influence on their financial participation in CVT, while it is quite noticeable in the Netherlands, where the rates of expenditure vary fivefold between the smallest and largest companies, and likewise in Germany, France and Spain, where they are tripled. The cost of trainee wages

accounts for a large part of training expenditures, and this is practically equivalent in all countries, between 40 and 60 percent.

The Training Plan:
A More Widespread Tool in French Companies

The existence of a training plan can help to measure the extent that continuing training policy is formalised at company headquarters. In France, 35 percent of the companies have a training plan, whereas this is the case for only about 25 percent of the companies in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Italy and not quite 20 percent in Germany. The relative advantage of French companies in this area must be qualified, however, insofar as the existence of such a plan often has more to do with a legal requirement than a real strategy. Indeed, companies with more than fifty salaried employees are required to submit a training plan to the bodies representing the personnel. In all countries, the elaboration of a training plan is strongly correlated to the size of the companies. Nearly all companies with more than one thousand employees (i.e., 80 to 100 % of them) indicate that they have such a plan. Conversely, in France as elsewhere, only one out of every five or six companies with less than fifty employees (one out of ten in Germany) has such a tool for managing continuing training.

DIVERSITY OF CONTINUING TRAINING

Country comparisons necessitated broadening the concept of continuing training to formulas other than training courses and notably to include training in work situations (TWS), lectures and workshops, job rotation, quality circles and self-training. This extended definition allowed certain previously unidentified training situations in France to be recognised.

DIVERSITY OF TRAINING SITUATIONS (% OF COMPANIES INVOLVED)

	CVT overall	Training courses	TWS	Lectures, workshops	Job rotation	Self-training
France	62	48	39	15	16	11
Belgium	46	41	31	28	18	12
Netherlands	56	56	21	42	9	28
Luxembourg	60	55	26	42	12	7
Germany	85	59	56	72	18	17
Spain	27	21	10	10	4	3
Italy	15	9	5	8	2	1

France: Prevalence of Courses and Training in Work Situations

The companies having recourse to diversified training situations are most often those which already finance training courses. In the Netherlands, the two groups of companies are practically the same, while in the other countries, and especially in Germany, a minority of companies abandon courses for other training situations.

If courses and TWS are by far the most common formulas employed by the French companies, the most frequent hierarchy observed in the other countries is the following:

(1) Courses
(2) Lectures and workshops
(3) Training in work situation (TWS)
(4) Job rotation and quality circles
(5) Self-training

It should be noted that lectures and workshops are used by a large share of companies in the three countries of Northern Europe (in the case of Germany, nearly three-quarters of the companies), while the two countries of the South seem to ignore such practices, and France and Belgium fall somewhere in between.

With regard to TWS, France is second only to Germany, while Spain and Italy seem to rely on it only marginally. There is fairly little recourse to job rotation and quality circles in the whole of the countries observed. This is also the case with self-training except for Dutch companies, which seem to be more open to such new practices.

TRAINING IN THE WORK SITUATION IN FRANCE

Training in the work situation is widespread in large companies (75 % practice it). It is also present in the majority of the medium-sized companies (45-69 %) but only a minority of small units employing ten to forty-nine persons (31%). The sectors with the highest rates are post office and telecommunications (59 %), retail trade (57 %), automobile sales and repair (43 %), machine and equipment manufacture (42 %), hotel and catering industry (42 %) and banking and insurance (71 %). At the opposite end are transportation equipment manufacture (16 %), manufacture of pulp, paper and paper products, printing and publishing industries (20 %), transport (24 %), food-processing industry (24 %) and construction (28 %).

TWS is generally linked to training courses or other training situations. Among those companies using it, only a third eliminate all other forms of training. This choice is most often observed in small companies with fewer than fifty salaried employees and in the retail trade, hotel-catering, metalworking and construction sectors (which traditionally use little formal continuing training).

Training in the Work Situation (TWS)

The TWS programmes included in the national surveys must meet the following criteria:

- They take place at the work station with the usual tools;
- They have been decided upon by an immediate superior;
- They take place within a fixed period of time;
- They involve a tutor or teaching tools (software, manual);
- They are provided within the context of clearly defined objectives ("The person should be able to...").

Intermittent periods of on-the-job learning that do not result from an effort initiated and organised by the company are not considered as TWS. ■

Varied Objectives

The objectives of TWS fall into two different but comparable categories: the management of employment and mobility on the one hand, and the adaptation of competences

to technical and organisational changes on the other. In the second category, a major place is occupied by training provided by suppliers for new equipment (57 % of the companies invoke this objective), while in the first, training of new recruits (65 %) is most often cited.

FREQUENCY OF TWS OBJECTIVES

		% of companies involved[1]
Employment management	• Youth training (apprenticeship, alternating training)	34
	• New recruits (other than young people)	65
	• Persons transferred to a new post	35
Technological and organisational changes	• Training provided by suppliers of new equipment	57
	• Training provided by immediate superiors for new equipment, products or processes	24
	• Adaptation to post (other than above situations)	22
	• Safety measures	34
	• Other	9

1. Among total number of companies having recourse to TWS.

What predominates, however, is the sharp diversity of motives behind recourse to TWS. No objective is considered unimportant and companies cite an average of four reasons to explain their use of TWE. In addition, the frequency and diversity of motives increase sharply with the size of the company.

Possibilities of Access Less Affected by Company Size than in the Case of Training Courses

One out of five French employees benefits from TWE in the course of a year. The chances of access increase with company size, but the disparities are much more limited than in the case of training courses. The gap between small units (10 to 49 employees) and large companies (1,000 employees and over) is about 1:3, with 10 percent of the personnel entering TWS in the first group and 28 percent in the second. In the case of training courses, the rate of access is five times greater in the large units.

An Unfavourable Position for Workers

Access to TWS becomes more frequent as employees climb the job ladder: 20 percent of engineers and managers benefit from TWS, while the proportion drops to 8 percent for workers, who occupy a marginal position in this form of training. By contrast, the other categories are not only more involved but show very similar patterns: technicians and other intermediate occupations (apart from supervisors) are in a situation equivalent to that of managers, and 17 percent of employees in administration, services or sales have access to TWS. The effect of company size on the possibilities of access remains limited, especially for clerical employees and workers.

Considerably Greater Time Period for TWS than for Courses

The time allotted to TWS corresponds to an average of a day and a half per month. The intermediate professions and managers enjoy the longest training periods—two days a month for the former and nearly as much for the latter—while workers and clerical employees receive training just over one day a month. This modest hierarchy is fairly general, regardless of company size. Two important qualifications must be emphasised, however. On the one hand, workers are trained for longer periods of time in small and medium-size companies (10-250 employees) than in larger ones (over 250 employees). On the other hand, firms with 50 to 250 employees are the ones with the longest periods of TWS (an average of 2-3 days a month), for all personnel categories. Finally, TWS seems to last longer in the manufacturing sectors (15-21 hours) and less in tertiary activities and construction (9-14 hours).

Overall, TWS appears to be a relatively well accepted training practice in French companies. Disparities among different personnel categories, company sizes or activity sectors are less pronounced than for CVT, but its role as a substitute for the latter is very limited. It tends to complement the recourse to training courses or other training situations rather than replace them. The use of TWS seems to meet a need for additional training, notably one that bears on adapting competences to the work activity or environment and that is best met through structured forms of implementation that are far removed from the most informal on-the-job training.

François Aventur and Martine Möbus
Statistical processing: Jean Pelé and Christèle Philippe

SOURCE

François Aventur, Martine Möbus, Jean Pelé and Christèle Philippe. *Enquête communautaire sur la formation professionnelle continue dans les entreprises.* [Community Survey on Continuing Vocational Training in the Companies.] Technical report and preliminary results from the French survey. July 1995.

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